

AROUND THE CORPS IN BRIEF

Deployed troops pause to remember fallen

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq — Deployed Marines, sailors and soldiers gathered here to remember fallen comrades on Memorial Day, May 31. The outdoor observance included remarks from Brig. Gen. Richard S. Kramlich, the 1st Force Service Support Group’s commanding general. The general said young people serving now are the “next great generation,” drawing parallels to World War II veterans, who fought for nearly four years and suffered hundreds of thousands of casualties fighting their generation’s war. Today’s youth, he said, are no different. The general explained that today’s young people don’t get the credit they deserve for sacrificing as much as they have in their own generation’s war. Following the general’s speech, the names of 79 I Marine Expeditionary Force personnel, who have died since Marines assumed responsibility of Iraq’s Al Anbar Province earlier this year, were read.

After the eulogy, Marines fired a 21-gun salute toward the mid-morning sun. To bring the ceremony to a close, a small stereo quietly played “Taps.” The ceremony was not the first event held to recognize Memorial Day here. Several hundred service members here ran five kilometers May 29, to honor the fallen troops.

More than 800 U.S. service men and women have been killed supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom since March 19, 2003.

‘Wolfpack’ receives aviation safety award

ALASAD, Iraq — The Secretary of the Navy, the honorable Mr. Gordon R. England, awarded the Aviation Unit Safety Award to Lt. Col. Mark S. Jebens, commanding officer, Marine


Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, here May 18. The squadron reached the 50,000 Class “A” mishap-free hour milestone on Jan 29 while aboard the USS Boxer on the way to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The secretary said he was honored to present the award to the squadron while they continued to perform their mission of support here in Iraq. Since the squadron’s commission into the Marine Corps nearly 20 years ago, Nov. 30, 1984, HMM-466 has never had a class “A” mishap, in training or during operations. HMM-466, nicknamed “Wolfpack,” is the only CH-53E Super Stallion squadron in the Marine Corps to have achieved this feat. Reaching this type of milestone involves many people, claimed Jebens. “I attribute this to the professional aviators and maintainers,” he said. “It’s truly been a team effort not just for me, but for all of my predecessors over the years.”

One indispensable part of the squadron is the maintainers, noted Gunnery Sgt. William A. Gearhart, maintenance control chief, HMM-466. The maintenance Marines help eliminate mechanical variables that might cause a crash, he added.

Combat operations help drive enemy away

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RIPLEY, Afghanistan — After a month of continuous combat operations, the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) is helping drive a stake into the heart of Taliban and anti-coalition militia activity in south-central Afghanistan. Consisting of its Command Element, Battalion Landing Team 1st Bn., 6th Marines, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 266 (Reinforced), and MEU Service Support Group 22, the MEU

If we can make it here, we’ll make it anywhere ...



Cpl. Glen R. Springstead

NEW YORK – Marines tackle a small hill on their way to the Ground Zero site during a motivational run here yesterday. More than 300 Marines, Coast Guardsmen and NY Port Authority police officers participated in the run, which was part of the 2004 Fleet Week celebration in New York City

arrived in Afghanistan in late March, and by mid-April began sending armed forays into the Oruzgan province, in the south-central part of the country. These missions, dubbed Operations Ulysses I-V, were reconnaissance patrols to the region around the town of Tarin Kowt, where the MEU would eventually establish Forward Operating Base Ripley, its base of operations. Combat operations began in earnest April 26 with the beginning of Operation Rio Bravo, which was immediately followed by El Dorado May 10. These operations were designed to disrupt Taliban and anti-coalition militia activity in regions long known to harbor and support these insurgent forces. “This size area [where the MEU operates] is normally assigned to a regiment, or in some cases a brigade,” said Lt. Col. Asad A. Khan, commanding officer of BLT 1/6. “It’s really rugged terrain and the Marines have done all we’ve asked and more.”

The main focus of these operations was to disrupt the enemy’s line of communications, uncover hidden caches of arms and ammunitions, and seek out and destroy Taliban and ACM forces. To date, the MEU has conducted 156 patrols, 70 cordon and search operations, begun or planned more than 80 civil affairs projects, searched more than 3,700 vehicles, and uncovered at least 37 arms caches.

Warrior rooms pamper injured Marines

MCAGC TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. — Injured Marines and sailors come home every month to heal their wounds and possibly go back to the front lines. Marine Corps Community Services and the family readiness officers here have gone out of their way to make sure those healing troops are cared for. More than a dozen “casualty rooms” have been set up in barracks around the base for every Marine and sailor who returned injured while deployed to Iraq. “Truthfully it’s primarily coming out of a First Marine Division policy,” said Gunnery Sgt. Mark E. Mitchell, operations chief, MCCS. “The rooms were originally designated as ‘warrior rooms.’ Aboard this base the battalions developed their own casualty rooms.” “The casualty rooms are for wounded Marines and sailors coming back from Iraq or overseas. They’re meant for those recovering for a certain time

before they get released by the medical office or go on convalescent leave,” said Staff Sgt. James K. Skok, family readiness officer, 7th Marine Regiment. “The rooms are hooked up with everything they need including cable TV and linen. [They are] always located on lower deck of our barracks for easy access.” Although the 14 rooms are meant for a long stay, most Marines and sailors only occupy the room for a couple days until they return home to their families, according to Skok. All of the gear and equipment provided for the casualty rooms was donated through the efforts of MCCS and the Key Volunteer Network. Currently 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines, 3/4, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, 3/7 and 2/7 have created warrior rooms for their returning troops.

Marines, Iraqi defense open new joint center

CAMP HIT, Iraq — Marines from 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment took another step closer to turning over security responsibilities of this western Iraqi region to the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps recently. Marines and ICDC soldiers established a new Joint Coordination Center here. The center will allow Marines and ICDC soldiers to get more integrated and acquainted with each other, according to Capt. Douglas D. Downey, Company G commander. More importantly, it demonstrates the Iraqis’ ability to begin defending themselves. The center gives Iraqi leaders an insight to the missions at hand, managing future operations, communications with their own soldiers, and intelligence gathering for future operations. “The hardest part is communication,” said 1st Lt. Allen R. McBroom, a platoon commander with the battalion’s Weapon’s Company. “When there are no interpreters around, it makes it hard.” Time is crucial whenever help is needed and getting the ICDC out there is complicated at times, said Allen. Iraqi leaders are still learning crucial steps to assist a unit in need, such as blocking off roads and calling support. Marines, in the meantime, are taking the opportunity to lead their Iraqi counterparts by their own example. Mostly, Marines are trying to instill a sense of unit pride and discipline among the Iraqis through routine military duties such as formations, physical training


and other basic military fundamentals. The plan, according to Allen, is to eventually turn over more and more of the operation of the JCC to the Iraqis, letting them assume greater control of their area of operations.

‘Raider 3’ gets into fight in Afghanistan

CENTRAL ORUZGAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — For nearly a month, the Marines of 3d Platoon (call sign - Raider 3), Bravo Co., Battalion Landing Team 1st Bn., 6th Marines watched in frustration as their comrades-in-arms scoured the hills of south-central Afghanistan hunting for Taliban insurgents and anti-coalition militia. As the standing tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel (TRAP) force for the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), the platoon was ordered to remain at Kandahar Air Field while the majority of the MEU pushed forward into Afghanistan’s Oruzgan province. Finally, with the beginning of Operation Blade Runner, a multi-company sweep of a series of villages for hidden arms caches and enemy troops, the platoon finally got its chance to get into the fray. “We spent the whole month anxious to join the rest of the company,” said Lance Cpl. James Jeffery, a 3d Platoon rifleman. “We were all ready to go, and motivated to get our chance to do our small role in the big picture [war in Afghanistan].” During their time at Kandahar, the platoon stood ready to launch at a moment’s notice should an aircraft from the MEU’s aviation combat element, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 266 (Reinforced), go down in the unforgiving Afghan terrain. “A lot of our time was spent doing MOUT [Military Operations in Urban Terrain] training,” said Lance Cpl. Jared Briggs, a 3d Platoon rifleman. “We even had a small room built like the Afghans use to practice clearing and searching.” During Blade Runner, the platoon inserted by seven-ton trucks into an area suspected of supporting Taliban insurgents and quickly fanned out through a series of sun-baked mud compounds searching for the enemy or hidden caches of arms and ammunition.

Compiled by the MCRD Parris Island Public Affairs Office

Knock, knock ...



Gunnery Sgt. Keith A. Milks

ORUZGAN, Afghanistan – A rifleman with 3d Plt., Bravo Co., Battalion Landing Team 1st Bn., 6th Marines provides security as one of his fellow Marines enters a house in Afghanistan's Oruzgan province. BLT 1/6 is the ground combat element of the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and is in Afghanistan conducting combat and civil military operations.

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the Depot, the former grunt expressed his feelings about leaving the island behind. “It breaks my heart to leave,” he said. “There are some really good people here. I don’t think I could have spent my time here any better. Marines, continue to do what you are doing because you are doing it well.” Valentin said he will never forget Arndt’s incredible work ethic and ability to get the job done. “Nothing is ever too complex or difficult for him to get something done,” he said. While Arndt got things done during his time aboard the Depot, the same could be said for Hollings, who has been stationed here before on more than one occasion. The Macclennny, Fla. native,

entered recruit training at Parris Island in 1979, and moved on to his Military Occupational Specialty school as a basic warehousemen at Camp Lejeune, N.C. From there he was transferred to Okinawa, Japan, where he served as a warehouseman and was meritoriously promoted to the ranks of lance corporal and corporal. In 1981 he was reassigned to H&SBn. aboard the Depot, where he held the billet of platoon sergeant along with his duties as NCO in charge for the men’s clothing section. After being promoted to sergeant in 1982, Hollings was reassigned to Albany, Ga. where he became the warehouse and logistics chief. One year later Hollings was on the move with orders to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Iwakuni, Japan. Soon after completing his

assignments in Japan he again came back to his semi-permanent home at Parris Island serving with RTR as a warehouse chief. Being deployed back and forth from Japan to Parris Island seems a pattern that could not be broken, but Hollings managed to snap out of the routine only after one last trip to Iwakuni in 1986. The break came when he received orders to MCRD San Diego, where he held the billets of drill instructor, senior drill instructor and chief drill instructor at Drill Instructor School. During his three-year tour in San Diego, he was promoted to staff sergeant and, two years later, meritoriously to gunnery sergeant. In 1990 Hollings was stationed at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and deployed under Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. In March 1992 Hollings was

reassigned to Headquarters Marine Corps for three years before going to Japan and attaining the rank of first sergeant. He served consecutive assignments as Company First Sergeant, with H&S Company, 3rd Maintenance Battalion, First Sergeant for MEU service and Support Group-31, 31st MEU and as Company First Sergeant with the General Supporting Maintenance Company, 3rd Maintenance Battalion. In 1998 Hollings was selected and promoted to the rank of sergeant major. One year later he was transferred to Recruiting Station, Jacksonville, Fla., where he served as the RS Sergeant Major until April 2002. Prior to reporting to Parris Island for the fourth time, Hollings served with the Marine Helicopter Squadron One, Quantico, Va.